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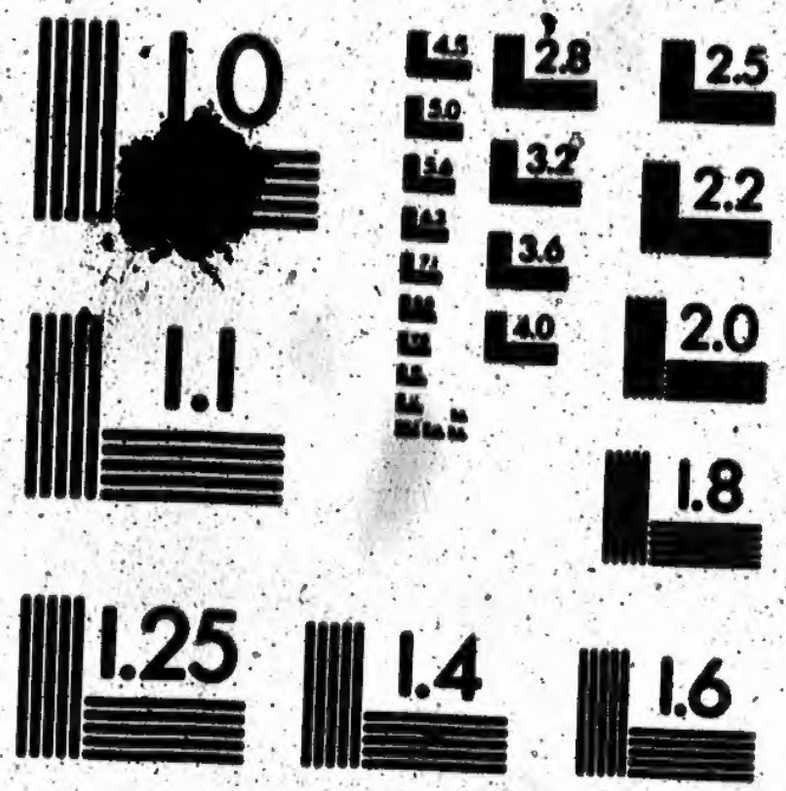

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THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

OF THE

Election of Jacob and rejection of Esau,

CONSIDERED:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT VERGENNES,

In the State of Vermont,

SEPTEMBER 12, 1810,

BY THE

REV. DANIEL BURHANS, A. M.

RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, NEWTOWN, (CON.)

Published at the request of the hearers.

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SECOND EDITION:

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SANDWICH, U. C:

Printed at the Office of the CANADIAN EMIGRANT:

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Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? LAM. iii. 37.

Horribile Decretum, fateor. CALVIN.

Second Edition.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In the year 1810, the Author of the following discourse was requested to visit the State of Vermont as a missionary, and to inquire into the state of the *Church Lands*, so called. While at Vergennes, there was a question agitated whether the *Church* was Calvinistic.—I was requested to preach on the doctrine of Predestination.—The sermon was written in haste, and by earnest desire was printed, too much from the impulse of the moment. It was soon out of print,—a second edition proposed: the author not desiring to continue the controversy, refused; believing there was not so much danger to be apprehended from Calvinism, as from Pelagianism, the other extreme. But for several years past he has altered his opinion: and from the prevailing tenets and contradictions of modern writers, it is the source of modern infidelity, under the specious garb of UNITARIANISM, UNIVERSALISM, &c.* No man will doubt of this who impartially examines the present state of the church in Geneva, and the Calvinistic churches in Germany, and the Congregational churches in New England; particularly those which descended directly from our *forefathers*, of PLYMOUTH ROCK memory.

Not only all formularies, especially the *Cambridge* and *Saybrook Platforms*, are laid aside; but the blessed Saviour is disrobed of his divinity: the Bible not only printed without *note and comment*, but translated anew, and curtailed, or allegorically explained. See the writings of PRIESTLY, BELSHAM, and ABNER KNEELAND's garbled translation of the New Testament.

The doctrine of Predestination, as defined by Calvin and his immediate followers, was introduced into the Christian church by St. Austin in his controversy with Pelagius upon the doctrine of *Original Sin*. The latter, by endeavouring to avoid the consequence of imputed guilt, advanced the following tenets; 1. That Adam was by nature mortal, and whether he had sinned or not, would certainly have died.—2. That the consequences of Adam's sin were confined to his own person.—3. That new born infants are in the same state with Adam before the fall.—4. That the law qualified men for the kingdom of heaven, and was founded upon equal promises with the gospel—that the grace of God was given according to our merits, &c. (Buck's Theological Dictionary, p. 119.)

Austin, who was Bishop of *Hippo* in Africa, raised his warning voice and wielded his pen against these unchristian tenets. But who is not swayed by early impressions? Austin was bred a Pagan, and in early life was a fatalist, and after his conversion embraced the doctrine of the Manicheans,

* These of late, like *Pontius Pilate* and *Herod*, have become friends, and the latter, who, but a few years ago, rested the eternal salvation of all men upon the Deity of Christ, who said upon the cross *it is finished*; now declares with the former, that Jesus Christ is a [illegible] man.

Manicheans, who believed in a good God, and an evil God. The first created the soul; the second the body and evil passions; and although Austin renounced these errors, and was one of the most pious and distinguished prelates of the church in the age in which he lived, the latter part of the 4th century, his former principles furnished him with arguments in exposing the dogmas of Pelagius, and with which he triumphed over his adversary, and put to silence, for the time being, this unreasonable man with his cotemporary *Celestius*. From this source may be traced the origin of Calvinism and Armenianism, which has disturbed the peace of the Christian church from that period to the present.

From the writings of Austin, and THOMAS AQUINAS, who flourished in the 9th century, the Synod of Dort, in 1618, composed of delegates very partially appointed from the reformed churches, established the following articles in condemnation of JAMES VAN-HARMINE, a Dutch divine called Arminius.*

ARTICLE I.

Of Divine Predestination.

"That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men, without any regard to their faith and obedience whatsoever; and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and appointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation without any regard to their infidelity or impenitency.

ARTICLE II.

Of the Merit and Effect of Christ's Death.

That Jesus Christ hath not suffered death for any other, but for those elect only; having neither had any intent or commandment of his Father, to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

ARTICLE III.

Of man's will in the state of nature.

That by Adam's fall, his posterity lost their free will, being put to an unavoidable necessity to do, or not to do, whatsoever they do, or do not, whether it be good or evil; being thereunto predestinated, by the eternal and effectual Secret Decree of God.

ARTICLE IV.

Of the manner of Conversion.

That God to save his elect from the corrupt mass, doth beget faith in them by a power equal to that whereby he created the world, and raised up

* Heylyn's History of this controversy, p. 523.

up the dead; insomuch that such unto whom he gives that grace, cannot reject it, and the rest being reprobate cannot accept of it.

ARTICLE V.

Of the certainty of Perseverance.

That such as have once received that grace by faith, can never fall from it finally, or totally, notwithstanding the most enormous sins they can commit."

Educated in the full belief of these articles, and having from early life a view to the ministry of the *word of reconciliation*, for several years I endeavored to reconcile them to the Scriptures, by vainly seeking after the hidded counsel of God. After many fruitless inquiries of clergymen, and Christians of various denominations, I was brought to believe, that *secret things belonged to God; that it was not in man that walketh to direct his steps;* that the Scriptures were able to make us wise unto salvation; that they were not only *a rule of life*, but pointed out a way for the helpless sinner to obtain salvation though the atonement made by Jesus Christ; that they pointed out a way for the creature to approach the Most High God. I read them with a prayerful, heart free from prepossession, and they revealed to me a system of TRUTH, that gave me peace in believing.

Soon after this, I read, for the first time, the 39 Articles of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND; they perfectly agreed with my views of the faith once *delivered to the saints;* and particularly the doctrine of Predestination and Grace. In examining the divine constitution of the church and her excellent liturgy, (against which I had imbibed the strongest prejudices,) I embraced her communion, and was enabled by divine grace to understand the texts explained in this Sermon, and should my commentaries remove the doubts of a single individual (doubts which brought me on the brink of despair,) I shall submit with cheerfulness to the censures which are expected from the misguided zeal of some.

That God may bless this labour of love to the awakening the sinner, to the arousing the lukewarm, to the comforting the feeble minded, and the strengthening of all, is the fervent prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

Newtown, January 14, 1828.

SERMON.

Rom. ix. 13.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

God is infinite; man is finite. Of this truth the great Apostle Paul was most deeply sensible; for after considering the election of the posterity of Abraham to be the only people in covenant with God, and the consequent uncovenanted state of the rest of mankind; the subsequent reconciliation of the Gentile world, and the casting away of the Jewish nation, "because of unbelief;" he foretells, under the spirit of prophecy, the future restoration of the latter, when "the fulness of the Gentiles" shall have "come in." The sight of this mighty plan of mercy, so grand, so wise, yet so incomprehensible, fills him with reverence and humility; and in the language of astonishment he exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."—Rom. xi. 33.

Under impressions similar to those of the Apostle, I enter upon the subject of the *Divine Decrees*.

Men of distinguished talents and exemplary piety have embraced opposite sentiments upon this intricate subject: and many, notwithstanding the declaration of Moses,* have pretended to explain the secret will of God; and have endeavored to establish tenets and draw inferences, repugnant to "the faith once delivered to the saints."

On the one side it is asserted that, "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."†

On the other, it is acknowledged, that God "hath *constantly decreed*, by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in *Christ* out of mankind."‡

The latter is considered as a doctrine uniformly held and taught by the Catholic Church, and founded upon the holy oracles of God: while the former is founded rather upon metaphysical subtleties, and supported by sentences of Holy Scripture, arbitrarily detached from the context. To examine a few of these passages, as well as the text, and give my own opinion, is the object of this present discourse.

May

* Deut xxix. 29.
† Assembly of Divines' Catechism.
‡ Seventeenth Article of the Church.

May the merciful Saviour, by his holy spirit, direct me in delivering it; and take from you all ignorance, and blindness of heart, pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy; envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness, in hearing and receiving the word of truth.

Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.

The Apostle quotes this passage from Malachi, who wrote it more than fourteen hundred years after Jacob and Esau were dead; he must of course have intended to apply this expression, not to them, but to their posterities; and therefore his words could not have had the least reference to their future state, much less to their persons. This is abundantly evident from what we read in Gen. xxv. 23. "And the Lord said unto her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger." Esau himself never did serve Jacob, but his posterity was brought under tribute by David.—2 Sam. viii. 14.

We therefore can infer no personal election, or reprobation of Jacob and Esau, any further than what related to their posterity. God preferred the line of Jacob to that of Esau, for the conveyance of the blessing promised to Abraham, that in his seed, i. e. in the Messiah, all the families of the earth should be blessed. Hence there could be no eternal election, even of their posterities, farther than what respected their national and temporal prosperity.

Therefore by the name of Jacob, we understand the progenitor of Christ, and the Jewish Church; which was more beloved and favoured by God, till Messiah was born; and by Esau, the Gentile world, "whose mountains were laid waste:" in which respect they may be said to be hated, because they were not favoured with the signal blessings bestowed upon the Jewish nation. This hatred then means no more than a less degree of love, or a smaller manifestation of favour. As it is said, "Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah—when the Lord saw that Leah was *hated*, or less esteemed, he blessed Leah."

If, (says our Saviour,) any man will come unto me, and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple.—Luke xiv. 26. What alarming consequences would follow, should we understand our Saviour as some pretend to understand God, respecting Jacob and Esau! To be the disciples of Christ, we must break the fifth commandment, and instead of honouring and obeying our parents, we must hate and despise them! Hence I infer that there is not the least hint of any personal hatred or reprobation of Esau, with regard to his future state.

The plain meaning is this; God chose Jacob without any regard to his having done "any good or evil," as he had before chosen Shem, the youngest of Noah's family, instead of Japheth, the elder; Abraham, rather than Haran; Isaac rather than Ishmael; Judah and David in preference to their brethren, to be the progenitors of Christ. Jacob and Esau could not both be chosen or elected for this end; and God, who has a right "to do what he will with his own," preferred Jacob.

This explains another passage, in this 9th chapter of Romans. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth."—Esau *willed, and ran*, for the

the savoury meat, that his father might bless him: but Jacob obtained the blessing.* Yet when Esau besought his father to bless him also' the blessing which he received was equal to the blessing of Jacob, except as to what related to the line of the Messiah. "Behold," says Isaac, "thy dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above: but thou shalt serve thy brother," (i. e. be inferior to him for a time) "but it shall come to pass, that when thou shalt have dominion, thou shalt break his yoke off thy neck. "If you for a moment admit that Esau was a reprobate, and hated before he was born, and sent to hell when he died; in order to fulfil the blessing of Isaac, you must also admit that at some future period, he will change his condition.

But Abraham to the rich man, declares there is a "great gulph fixed, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us who would come from thence."—*Luke* xvi. 26. But when we look to their posterities, we find this literally fulfilled, in the days of Joram.—2 Kings viii. 20.—And it was also prophetically accomplished, when the Jews were rejected, and the Gentiles called, without any allusion to the *good or evil works* of the latter. At that time, when "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," (John i. 9.) shone into the darkness, and the darkness of the Jews "comprehended it not;" when he "who would have all men to be saved," (1 Tim. ii. 4) wept over their devoted city, saying, "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem,— how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not;" (Matt. xxiii. 27) at the time when St. Paul said, *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles;* then was the yoke prophetically broken off, and "the mountains of heathenism, that had been laid waste, rejoiced, and the solitary place was glad."—Mal. i. 2—Isa. xxxv. 1. Then was the saying of the evangelical prophet fulfilled, in that passage so often brought to prove passive conversion, "I am found of them that sought me not."—Isa. lxv. 1.

The truth I am endeavouring to impress upon your minds, is this, that neither the one prophecy nor the other had any reference to their persons nor any allusion to their eternal state; but related wholly to the genealogy of the Messiah, and the national and temporal blessings of the Church. And if it cannot be shown that they had any reference to the eternal election or reprobation of Jacob and Esau, much less may we infer from these words, the eternal election or reprobation of others.

In this view of the subject, the writings of St. Paul, although "hard to be understood," will appear such, as must check the presumptuous Calvinist from wresting them to his own destruction: (2 Peter iii. 16) and arouse the Anti-Calvinist "to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling"—"lest having a promise left, he should fall short."—Phil. ii. 12—Heb. iv. 1.

The Scripture doctrine of personal election under the law, related to those who were brought into covenant by circumcision, and such were called God's elect. "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thee name, and yet thou hast not known me." —Isa. xlv.

* "Because," says Dr. Turner, p. 73, "these favours do not depend on our inclination and efforts, but on God's goodness."

—Isa. xlv. And when the Christian Church was grafted into the old stock, as declared by St. Paul in the 11th chapter of Romans, it was emphatically called the elect of God.—1 Peter v. 13. Hence the Apostle; "I endure all things for the elect's sake," (2 Tim. ii. 10.) i. e. the Church.

The New Testament, therefore, assures us, that all baptised persons are added to the Church, and considered as persons elected *by grace*, i. e. the gracious dispensation of the Gospel. Also this leads us to understand St. Paul, when he says, "there is a remnant according to the election of grace:" meaning a few who acknowledged Christ to be the *Antitype* of the sacrifices under the Levitical law, which was fulfilled by his sufferings.

"Therefore," says he, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."—Rom. iii. 20. "By the deeds of the law," i. e. *burnt offerings and sacrifices*. The same Apostle, writing upon the same subject to the Ephesians, (chap. iii,) says, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Also to the Galatians, (chap. iii.)—"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The great objection of the Jews to the Gospel, was on account of its universal benevolence, declared by an angel at the birth of Christ, and exhibited by our Saviour in a life spent "in going about and doing good to all sorts and conditions of men."

The Jews were rigid predestinarians, and when our blessed Lord told them that "he came to save the world," (John iii. 17.) they were offended. They considered themselves as the only elected people of God; the Mosaic dispensation as perpetual; and their justification in the sight of God, as arising from an external compliance with the rites enjoined by the law. To show the absurdity of this opinion, and the necessity of faith and obedience to the Gospel, was the great object of the Apostle, in writing his Epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Ephesians; in which he labours to prove the nullity of the Levitical law, and the necessity of "*faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, *operating by love*."

By losing sight of this great object of the sacred writer, men have introduced into the doctrine of the Gospel, that is all benevolent like its author, the scheme of unconditional election and reprobation; opposing the moral law to free grace, and justification through faith. Whereas, if we keep in view the great object of the Gospel scheme, the "breaking down the middle wall of partition," (Eph. ii. 14.) and opening a door of free unmerited grace, to all nations, tongues and languages; instead of puzzling our heads with metaphysical questions concerning moral or natural ability, the prescience of God, and free agency of man, we shall mortify spiritual pride, by diligently improving that "manifestation of the spirit which is given to all men, to profit withal."—1 Cor. xii. 7.—And while thus "musing, the fire of divine love will kindle," and the "day star will arise," directing the humble inquirer to the "Lord our righteousness," who "will make us wise unto salvation."

I have

I have now satisfactorily shown, that the love and hatred in the text has no reference to the persons of Jacob and Esau; much less to the eternal state of themselves or their posterities.

But admitting the 9th chapter of Romans to contain the doctrine of God's eternal decrees of election and reprobation, how shall we preserve the consistency of the Apostle's reasoning? How shall we account for the manifest impropriety of his lamentation, in the introductory verses?

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

An inspired Apostle, who certainly rejoiced in all the ways of God, declares he has *continual sorrow and heaviness of heart*, at the approaching execution of God's decrees! And could he frustrate them, would even wish himself cut off from all hopes of salvation by Jesus Christ!

Had the Apostle believed in this uncomfortable doctrine, would he not have used far different language? Would he have insulted them by saying, "O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say why hast thou made me thus?" When he knew, and was just about to prove to them, that God, from all eternity, had made them vessels of wrath destined to eternal misery!

Far different were the sentiments of the holy and benovolent Apostle; who, from the example of his divine master, mourned over them, prayed and exhorted them, with all the zeal and warmth that became the subject, that they would be reconciled to God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore he begins the tenth chapter thus: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they *might* be saved."

On this ground he assured them, that "God was no respecter of persons;" that Christ tasted death for every man;" that he "is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." 1 Tim. iv. 10.

But notwithstanding all this, it is said that "Pharoah was created, raised up, and his heart hardened, that the glory of God might be manifested in executing his judgments upon him in this world, and his eternal wrath in the world to come." And all this for doing that which God from all eternity *foreordained* he should do! My brethren there is danger of wresting the *Scriptures to our own destruction*. Let us then compare Scripture with Scripture. In the 9th chapter of Exodus, we read what Moses in the name of God says unto Pharoah, "Now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth." But Pharoah was not destroyed by *pestilence*, because God *raised him up*, or as it should be rendered, *made* him *stand*. Read the passage either way, and it only proves that God raised him up, from under the plagues of the *bile* and *hail;* that he did not cut him off, but made him still to *stand*, "to show forth in him his power, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth."*

But

* Some of the most learned commentators, such as Whitby, Cartwright, and Ainsworth, read the whole passage thus: "Now I will stretch out my hand that I may

But it is objected, "The Lord hath hardened his heart." We also read, that "when Pharoah saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his own heart, he and his servants."

But how could he sin more, if God by a positive influx hardened his heart? I see no more in this, than is frequently experienced. For instance, God visits you with sickness; you beseech him to remove his chastisements; you promise a reformation of life, and future obedience. The Lord hears your prayers and efforts; "you recover, but, alas! your hearts become hardened. In one sense God hardens them, for he removes your afflictions; whereas if he had continued them, you would not have been thus hardened. Thus the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, or it was hardened, when he saw the locusts and darkness removed."*

Is it not then more agreeable to Scripture, and the common notions we have of good and evil, to believe that God, in just judgment for the stubbornness and cruelty of Pharoah and the Egyptians, suffered them to fill in their own wickedness? or that as a moral governor of the world, he permitted them to act as free and moral agents, rather than assert, that he hardened their hearts by a positive and judicial act of blindness; so that they could not see or act in any manner different from what they did, but their whole in conduct answered the end for which they were made? Is not this rendering our all-merciful Creator more odious and despotic than even Pharoah, when requiring "brick without straw?" With much less propriety can we infer that he, "who so loved the world" as to redeem it with the blood of his own Son, should absolutely and unconditionly determine the eternal damnation of any of his creatures.

The same may be said of that noted passage in the 6th chap. of Isaiah. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." This passage is quoted by all the Evangelists, by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, and by St. Paul in the 11th chap. of Romans. But in all these quotations it is differently expressed; and if cited to prove what is called God's sovereignty in hardening hearts, it is unmeaning and contradictory. This hardness of heart, this blindness and stupidity, if taken literally, is sometimes attributed to God; sometimes to his ministers; but most generally to the people themselves. When our Saviour, who certainly understood Scripture, as well as modern divines, quoted this passage from Isaiah, instead of charging God with *hardening their hearts*, he says, "this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing"—Matt. xiii. 15. He lays the blame where it ought to be laid, upon the people; and says, *seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not*—and adds the reason, *because they will not*. But, say the advocates for foreordination, *they will not*, because *they cannot*!—and quote the

smite thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou shalt be cut off from the earth; but in very deed for this cause I have made thee stand." See Bishop Patrick on this passage.

* Stackhouse upon the decrees. See also 1 Sam. ch. vi.

† Edwards on the Will.

the passage as cited by St. Mark. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may not see," &c.---Mark iv. 11.

Now dare any one, from this passage, infer that Christ delivered himself obscurely, on purpose that the people might not understand him? Is it possible that the benevolent Saviour, after declaring, *I am the light of the world; I came a light into the world; I came not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing;* I say is it possible, after all this, and his often repeated admonition, *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, that he should designedly so speak that the world *might* remain in *darkness*, die in their sins, and be damned for ever, to fulfill a decree passed ages before they were born! Far from us, my brethren, be a thought so derogatory to the character of our merciful and adorable Redeemer.

Therefore, to understand this subject of *giving* or not *giving*, let it be considered that a thing offered with a real intention of giving, may be said to be given with regard to the design of the donor, whether it be received or not. Hence Christ is said to give *his life a ransom for all*, though all do not receive him. Again, it may be said to be given even to those who will not receive what is offered.—Thus Moses tells the Jews, "That the Lord had not given them a heart to perceive, eyes to see, nor ears to hear, unto this day."—Deut. xxix. 4. Not that the Lord had never offered them grace; it is certain he did, and in this sense he did give it them, if they would have received it. Thus we very often say, we gave it to him, but he would not receive it; or I did not give, because he would not receive it. In this sense our Saviour says, *To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.* They were predisposed to receive it. Many of the Jews were so bitterly opposed to the doctrine of universal benevolence, which our Saviour constantly manifested in his life and conversation, that they *would not endure sound doctrine*; therefore he says, he spake *to them in parables, as they were able to bear it.* He did not give them a heart to believe, not because he was unwilling to give, but because they were unwilling to receive.

Another reason may be assigned: The Jews as a nation, had sinned away their day of grace.—Their house had become desolate.—Matt. xxiii. 34. And this explains what our Saviour says a few verses after the above passage—"*Whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.* By having, is here to be understood receiving, and so receiving as to *improve;* and by not *improving* the being *given over to a reprobate mind.* And this also explains to us who the reprobates are, viz. those slothful servants, who will not comply with the means of grace. This is most beautifully illustrated and enforced by the parable of the talents—*Take from him the one talent and give to him that hath ten talents.* The plain meaning of our Saviour appears to be this: Whoever *improves* the talent committed to his trust, to him more shall be given; but from him who neglects to *improve*, shall be taken away

away the power of *improving*. This appears to have been the case with Pharoah, in the latter period of his life; with the nation of the *Jews*, in the time of our Saviour; we may add, the awful situation of all Christians, who misimprove their day of grace. May the following passages awaken the careless! *My spirit shall not always strive with man.*—"God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie—that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

This key will unlock those solitary texts which are brought to prove God's irrespective decrees, by representing Him who proclaims himself "long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," (2 Peter, iii. 15.)—him "*whose tender mercies are over all his works*"—as the author of all the sin, from the transgression of Adam to the infidelity of the present age—which represent him who styles himself a God of Love, as a malevolent despot, foreordaining the sufferings of his creatures, and then insulting their miseries by inviting them to repent and believe in Christ, notwithstanding they are *totally depraved*, dead to every impulse of grace, predestined to eternal misery, beings for whom Jesus never shed one drop of blood.

It is not more strange than true, that many men, noted for learning, piety and good sense, have been so attached to their Calvinistic creed, as to assert, "*that infants are damned, not a span long:*" and that "Christ died only for the elect." And yet, say they, *the reprobates are damned for the want of faith, and might have been saved if they would have believed in Jesus Christ.* "The plain English of which," says a distinguished writer,* "is, they are damned for not believing a LIE!"

"But," says the advocate for these doctrines, "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"—Rom. ix. 21. This passage is quoted from the 18th chap. of Jeremiah, with the same view that the whole chapter was written, to show the justice of God in rejecting the Jews and calling the Gentiles. To satisfy your minds that there is no personal election or reprobation in this text, I have only to call your attention to the way and manner in which Jeremiah reasoned, and expressed it.

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made, marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it *again* another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."† Here notice, that the vessel which had been a good vessel, *marred in the hands of the potter, so he made it another vessel, as seemed good unto the potter.* So the nation of Israel, which had been a good vessel, *a chosen people, God's elect, marred in his hands*, so he made them a vessel of dishonour; fulfilling what Moses told them in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, which I request you to read, with other corresponding passages.

This

* Leslie.

† The six following verses are recommended to the careful reader.

This throws light upon another verse of this chapter; "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," quoted from the 33d chap. of Exodus; where Moses entreated God to spare the children of Israel, after they had sinned in making the *molten calf*. God says, (to convince Moses of his Almighty power) "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious; I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Thus hath God ever conducted, manifesting his power over all the nations of the earth, who are "before him as the drop of the bucket;" that when they have marred in his hand, as the vessel did in the hands of the potter, he hath "dashed them to pieces, like a potter's vessel."—Ps. ii. 9.

This we have seen wonderfully verified in our own day, among the European nations. Nay, we ourselves are threatened with impending calamity; for I consider the rod as still held over us, and I believe that unless, like the people of Nineveh, we humble ourselves, repent, and "turn from our evil way," we shall be cast off, as the Jews, and another nation will be called, as the Gentiles, by that God who will *have mercy on whom he will have mercy.**

These passages cannot be applied to the eternal election and reprobation of individuals, for two reasons.

1st. For this interpretation, there is not afforded so much as a shadow of the evidence.

2d. The inferences drawn from the promises are so derogatory to the character of God, and awful in their consequences, that I must, in the language of Calvin, style that decree by which "the fall of Adam did wrap up in eternal death so many nations, with their children, being infants, without remedy"—*horribile decretum*—a HORRIBLE DECREE.†

Furthermore, I cannot assent to these doctrines, because they are not agreeable to primitive faith, not having been known in the three first centuries, as testified by the ancient Fathers.‡ And this is acknowledged by Calvin himself. "All the first Fathers of the Church do unanimously agree, that God hath left it in the power of man to turn to vice or virtue, to believe or not to believe, and to choose faith and obedience, that our happiness or misery depends upon our own choice"—that "by virtue we may be God's and by wickedness the Devil's children"—and "that every one gives occasion to his Maker to render him a vessel of honor, or a vessel of dishonor.§

Let

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* Let it be remembered this sermon was preached in 1810.

† Cal. Inst., as quoted by Dr. Hobart; Apol. p. 264. Note.

‡ Stackhouse's Body of Divinity, and Whitby on Election and Reprobation.

§ Cal. L. iii. C. 22. §1.

§ Stackhouse *ubi supra*. Lest it should be thought that I misrepresent the Calvinistic doctrines, I shall refer the reader to the following publications from which I have added a few extracts: the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is considered as a standard of doctrine by the Presbyterian Churches in the U. States; and Vincent's Catechism, which is studied in Yale College in the senior year.

"As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto: neither are any other redeemed by Christ, *effectually called*, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only." *Confession of Faith*, Chap. iii. 6.

Let not these remarks be deemed uncharitable. I highly esteem many respectable characters who think differently from me upon these speculative subjects. It is not men, (who are all liable to *err*) but a vain philosophy, "and oppositions of science, falsely so called," that I am opposing.—1 Tim. vi. 20.

Hear me therefore of *your clemency*, a few words, in answer to the following question: What is the difference between the foreknowledge, and the decrees of God?

No question has puzzled more heads to less advantage, than this. And the plain reason is, because men undertake to explore what they acknowledge to be "*the unsearchable counsel of God.*"

That God, from all eternity, foreknew all events, is a certain truth: and that this foreknowledge lays no necessity upon the creature, is equally true. Thus they are both true; and this appears not from a number of hard words and metaphysical sylogisms, used by philosophers and *school divines*, but from matters of fact and plain Scripture. "The ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings."—Prov. v. 21." Thine eyes are upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every man according to the fruit of his doings."—Jer. xxxiv. 19." The Lord is a God of knowledge; by him actions are weighed."—1 Sam. ii. 3. His foretelling the Israelites' deliverance, four hundred and thirty years before, is an undeniable evidence of his *divine prescience*. So also is the fulfilment of the prophecies, in the rise and fall of Empires, and in the birth, life, character, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. But that this foreknowledge lays no necessity upon the creature, is evident from the testimony of every man's conscience and the whole tenor of Scripture.

The inference I draw from this is, that the *Decrees of God* are very different from his foreknowledge. Having foreknown all things, he decreed to reward all men according to their conduct. To prove this, I will mention but one passage: *When David was shut up in Keilah, Saul hastened to go down to take him. David inquired of the Lord*

For "the rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, † whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to *pass by* and to ordain them to *dishonor* and wrath for their *sin*, to the praise of his glorious justice. (*Con.* iii. 6.) Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved." *Con. of Faith*, x. 3.

"God's decree of election of men, is his eternal and unchangable purpose—he hath chosen some men unto everlasting happiness."—"God's decree of reprobation is his eternal purpose, according to his sovereignty and the unsearchable counsel of his own will, of passing by all the rest of the children of men which are not elected, and leaving them to perish in their sins."—"Again it was neither the good works foreseen in the one, which moved him to pass them by, but only because he would not he did not choose the rest, but decreed to withhold that grace which he was no ways bound to give unto them."—*Vincent's Catechism*, page 37.

I might add similar extracts from the Saybrook Platform. It being lately reprinted the reader is desired to compare it with the 39 Articles of the Church, and be no longer deceived by the disingenuous charge that the latter are Calvinistic.‡

† Nothing but Geneva Logic can explain, how we can understand what the unsearchable counsel of God is!

‡ See Note A.

whether Saul would come down, and the men of Keilah deliver him up! The Lord told him Saul would come down, and the men of Keilah would deliver him up.—1Sam. xxiii. 11, 12. David therefore fled, Saul did not come down, and the men of Keilah did not deliver up David. Therefore, although foreknown, it was not decreed in the same way as foreknown, because if it had been, it must certainly have taken place. Furthermore, admitting that God has decreed *whatsoever comes to pass*, and man act upon this faith; how can they be conscious, as we know all men are, of ever doing wrong? And how can that man repent of doing a deed, which he believes God foreordained he should do? Or how can God punish him for doing that which it was impossible for him to *leave undone*? In answer to all this it is said, "God must have had a plan,* and if any thing should take place different from this plan, he would be disappointed; therefore he must have decreed all things, and all things must take place agreeable to his decree." The premises are *true*, but the inference false.† And he who will not be satisfied with the following passages, must still prefer his carnal reason to the word of God: "Canst thou by searching, find out God?"—or "the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?"—Job xi. 7, 8. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."—Isaiah lv. 8.—"Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord hath not commanded it?"—Lam. iii. 37. Ah! who indeed? Those who say God *foreordained whatsoever comes to pass*. Some things then come to pass which God hath not decreed; and this fact is put beyond all reasonable controversy in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah where the Prophet is speaking of their offering children to Moloch—"which I commanded them not," *saith the Lord*, "neither came it into my h[illegible]." Jer. vii. 31—xxxiii.—35.

God's plan then appears to be a scheme of moral g[illegible] result of which is, to "reward all men according to th[illegible]." Rev. xx. 12. And as he has no where revealed unto us that his decrees and foreknowledge are the same, but has given undeniable evidence that they are different, I frankly acknowledge my ignorance of the foreknowledge of God, further than to believe it to be an attribute, by which he [illegible] *past, present* and *to come*. To undertake therefore to explain what is acknowledged by all to be "unsearchable," is folly in the extreme. And those who go undertake to explain what they acknowledge *unsearchable*, must still labour at the Herculean task, arguing in a circle, till they are convinced that *finite* cannot comprehend what is *infinite*.‖

There is such a thing as sin in the world; to say that God, *foreordained* it, but is not the author of it, is to me a contradiction. To say he is

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* See Butler's Analogy, particularly the 7th chapter. Also Whitby on the decrees.

† Hopkins' System of Divinity.

‡ Dr. Dana's second examination of Edwards on the Will.

‖ Whitby on Election and Reprobation.

God's foreknowledge has no influence at all upon my behaviour; it is no cause at all of my salvation or damnation. *Foreknowledge is knowledge, and knowledge depends on the existence of things known, and not they on it.* Should God by immediate revelation give me the knowledge of the event of any man's state or actions, would my

author but not the actor, is a solecism.‡ Undoubtedly God chooses what he wills; and he says *he hates sin*: therefore to say he *foreordained*, or willed sin, is saying he chooses what he hates!¶ It is said that *sin was ordained for the greatest good*; but sin is the greatest evil; therefore the greatest evil produces the greatest good. St. John says, "Let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous—He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."—1 John iii.7,8. The devil, therefore, and not God, is the author of sin.

Suffer me a few words further, upon a question that has blinded more hearts than it ever enlightened. "How came sin into the world?" Those who say *sin is an effect of the first cause, and was foreordained for the greatest possible good to the universe*, must acknowledge it came from God. The first thing to be done then is, either to show how an unchangeable cause can produce an ill effect, or else acknowledge that sin instead of a curse, is a blessing. And then secondly, to reconcile this with what is said of Jesus Christ, that *he came to destroy the works of the devil*. Surely Christ and Belial have not so much concord as both to be the authors of sin. I therefore believe with the Apostle, that sin is the work of the devil, and that by the transgression of our first parents, *sin and death entered into the world*." Rom. v. 12.‡

Should it be asked, how came Adam to sin? I answer, the devil (not God) tempted his wife, and she tempted him. But let the wisest man that ever lived answer the question. "God (says Solomon) made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions."—Eccl. vii. 29. And let the following remark of our blessed Saviour forever silence all such *foolish questions*; *Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thy own eye?* Why do you daily transgress the laws of God and man? Perhaps you are not more powerfully tempted than Adam was; and, admitting you are, remember God has promised, you "shall not be tempted above what you are able to bear."†—1 Cor. x. 13.

Happy would it have been for mankind, if they had attended to this truth declared by Moses, that "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God! but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and our children forever."—Deut. xxix 29. But, says the curious inquirer, is it not revealed that "God hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world?"—Eph. i. 4. And does not the 17th Art. of the Episcopal Church say the same? I answer yes; the Scripture and the Church agree in *this*, as well as in every thing *else*. But neither say, that God hath decreed and elected a certain definite number to salvation, and reprobated the rest to eternal damnation. These expressions are to be understood in the same manner as that in which it is said that Christ was slain

knowledge of them have any influence upon his actions? Surely none at all, and yet my knowledge as far as it is thus communicated, would be as certain and infallible as is that of God. See Sherlock on Providence.

‡ Dr. Dana, in answer to Mr. Edwards on the Will.

¶ Dr. Burnet's Exposition of the 17th Article of the Church.

† See Note B. ‡ James i. 17.

"plain from the foundation of the world;" an event which did not take place till about four thousand years after the world was created. God said to "Abraham, a father of many nations have I made thee," (Gen. xvii. 5.) at a time when he had but one son, and that was Ishmael. Also, St. Peter calls the Saints *elect according to the foreknowledge of God.* And St. Paul explains this as far as we are capable of understanding it by saying, "God calleth things that be not, as though they were."—Rom. iv. 17. There being no time in eternity, and God being *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*, all things are present. Therefore when God speaks to men living in time, he calls "*things that are not, as though they were.*" Hence St. Peter, speaking of an election "*according to the foreknowledge of God*," says, "through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience."—1 Pet. i. 3. Then obedience through the spirit *in time*, was the condition and the *time* of their election.

And thus says the Article of the Church, which is often asserted to be Calvinistic, and often quoted to prove a doctrine diametrically opposite to its express words.—"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby he hath *constantly decreed* to deliver from wrath and damnation, those whom he hath chosen out of mankind—being called according to God's purpose, by his spirit working in due season—they through grace obey the calling." Here the words *constantly decreed*, and *working in due season*, show that this election of individuals, takes place in time, upon those *who through grace obey the calling.* Such says St. Paul, "God hath from the beginning chosen to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth."—2 Thess. ii. 13. What *beginning* was this? It could not be from eternity, for that had no beginning. It was, when they believed the truth.

Therefore, that persons are elected, and predestinated, from the foundation of the world, is to be understood in the same sense that Christ was slain from the foundation of the world.

This also throws light upon another passage, misapplied by two modern writers, to prove their favourite schemes.* "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son —Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. viii. 29. 30. Foreknow what? Why that in time they would comply with the means of grace; by which, through the merits of Christ, God promises to justify, and glorify them. This also leads to an explanation of another passage: "Who worketh all things according to the counsels of his own will."—Eph i. 11. What is this will? To reward *all men according to their faith and obedience.*

Admit that the *foreknowledge* and *decrees* of God are the same, and agreeable to his will; that as he foreknew every person, he therefore decrees what every person does; and you must then also admit that every person does his will. Therefore, if we have as much faith as the devils have, only to *believe* and *tremble*, all men must be saved, because God *does not will the death of the sinner*, and our Saviour has promised eternal life to *those who do the will of his heavenly Father.*—Matt. vii. 21. But

*Dr. Huntington, and Dr. Strong.

But this cannot be true, because, "he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

Behold, then, my brethren, the awful consequences of asserting, that *God, for his own glory hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass:*— On the one hand, all future punishment is denied, because every man answers the end for which he was made, and is a mere machine, "acting as he is acted upon:" on the other hand, it is affirmed that a certain elected number are *irresistibly converted*, justified, sanctified, and saved, without the possibility by any misconduct, of forfeiting a salvation ensured to them by a partial decree, passed ages before they were born.— "The rest of mankind," says an elegant writer,* "go on in the broad road to destruction, and remain forever under the curse of Adam's sin.— Equally helpless, equally related, as the creatures of his hand, to the Father of mercies, with the elect objects of his favour, yet on them the Redeemer never cast one look of compassion; for them he never shed one drop of blood; to them he never dispenses one spark of effectual grace.— And yet in this state, without a Redeemer, without any participation of his grace, of course without the possibility of being saved, they are to receive the offers of salvation! Mockery of their wretchedness! According to this system, thousands, millions, myriads of hapless mortals will clank the chains of everlasting torment, will roll in the fires that never will be quenched, and will be gnawed by the worm that never dies, for the sin of another, for the sin of Adam; from the imputed guilt of which, left as they were by the decree of God, they possessed no means of escape.

"According to this system, the sinner dies, the anticipated torments of hell racking his soul, and its groans bursting from his lips, because God, for the manifestation of his glory," shut him out by a decree of reprobation, from the number of the elect. According to this system, "*elect* infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved;" and as "none are saved but the elect only," those infants dying in infancy who are not of the elect, are not saved. Alas! then, even those endearing infants, blessed by our Lord himself as the emblems of innocence, are perhaps destined to be torn from the cherishing bosom of their mothers, and to be sent to people the regions of the damned! Ye mothers! does not the bare possibility that the engaging prattlings of your lovely babes, may to-morrow be changed into the groans of fiends, plant a dagger in your bosoms more agonizing than the vengeful dart that drinks up the current of life! My heart shudders! Righteous God! who ever delightest in mercy! shall man transform thee into a demon like an insatiate Moloch, delighting in the perdition of the creatures of thy hand? No, thou holy, thou just, thou merciful Parent of the universe! the system which clothes thee with these terrors is disclaimed by reason, and by thy holy word."

Therefore as we cannot admit either of these systems, founded upon human reason, and, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*, we still hold fast the *faith once delivered to the saints;* acknowledging that the condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strengh—(Art. 10.) We believe

* Dr. Hobart's Apology, p. 262.

here our sufficiency is of God, "who so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16. We believe that, through his atonement, all men are put into a capacity of laying hold *on the word of eternal life*. We believe with St. Paul, that "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."—Rom. v. 18. On this ground we exhort sinners to repentance, that thro' faith, their obedience may be accepted.* On this ground we see all the attributes of the Deity in harmony; all His institutions, invitations and exhortations consistent; all the world guilty before God as touching the law of merit, but made capable of being saved by free grace, through Jesus Christ.

Thus, my hearers, I have endeavoured to explain the doctrine of election and reprobation, and the case of Jacob and Esau. I submit the whole subject to your serious consideration, requesting that what I have said may be compared with the Holy Scriptures. By the word of God we are to be judged, and by that we ought to judge ourselves. Every principle should be refered to Him that judgeth righteously. All disputings are to be carefully avoided.—Phil. ii. 14. Should men continue to apply the Calvinistic scheme as many have applied it and draw the natural and plain consequence, that there is no future punishment, and consequently that all men will be saved, I beseech you to refer the cause to Christ. Remember that in the last day he will say to the wicked, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—Mat. xxv. 41. The same will apply to those who say, God has *foreordained whatsoever comes to pass*. The Scriptures say, that the worshippers of Moloch did that *which God commanded not*.—If it be said that man is totally depraved, the Scripture says that Christ *is the true*

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* To effect this, God has, under various dispensations, instituted rites and sacraments to try the obedience of his creatures; offering all men grace, *and working in them of his good pleasure;* inviting them into his Church, that being elected, they may receive "special grace" to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Under the law, the means were *prefigurative;* under the Gospel, they are *commemorative:* all their efficacy and virtue depend upon faith. Hence circumcision typified the blood of Christ, to be shed for the remission of sin; and initiated the recipient into the elected number. So baptism commemorates and represents our being washed in the blood of Christ. As the Paschal Lamb in the passover prefigured the redemption of the world by Christ, so the Lord's Supper not only commemorates his body broken and his blood shed for the redemption of mankind, but is also the Christian sacrifice. As no person could be a Jew without circumcision, so no person can be a Christian without baptism; but as outward circumcision was of no avail without the inward circumcision of the heart, so baptismal regeneration will be of no avail to those adults who are not *renewed in the spirit of their mind.*

As all those who were circumcised were elected into the Jewish Church, and were commanded to receive the Passover, so all those who are baptized are elected into the Christian Church, and commanded *to examine themselves, and thus to eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

Therefore it follows, that all those who are renovated and alive in the habitual exercise of the Christian graces, through the merits of Christ, shall obtain eternal life.

But those who remain out of covenant, or seek in an imaginary experience for the evidence of their justification, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men are what the Scriptures call *self-righteous.* In the hands of God I leave them. I judge no man.

*true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and unto every man is given the manifestation of the spirit, to profit withal.** When it is said that unconverted men must not pray, cite the instance of Cornelius, whose prayers and alms, before he was converted, ascended as a memorial before God.—Acts x. 4. Fear and obey *God rather than man.* "Seek and ye shall find," &c.—Matt. vii. 7. 8. "I exhort that first of all, supplications, prayers and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.—For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour—who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—1 Tim. ii. 1—6.

In a word, *lay aside all malice, guile and hypocrisies; judge not lest ye be judged*; bearing in mind that we "*stand or fall to our own master.*" For we have found, that man is a *free moral agent*; that he is redeemed by Christ; that he has a talent committed to his trust; and that he is commanded *to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.*

We have found that faith, repentance, manifested by sincere obedience, are the express conditions on which God will accept of such sinful creatures as we are; and that the only evidence of our being in a state of justification, which we can either have ourselves, or can give to others, is the fulfilment of the condition. *Faith without works is dead.*

This is the current language of Scripture, from Genesis to the close of the holy oracles. "If thou dost well, (says God to Cain) shalt thou not be accepted? but if not well, sin lieth at the door."†—Gen. iv. 7. Moses says, "I set life and death, blessing and cursing before you; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."—Deut. xxx. 19. "Behold to obey, (says Samuel) is better than burnt offerings and sacrifices, and to hearken than the fat of rams." David—"Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and speaketh the truth in his heart.—*Ps.* xv. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments." The exhortation of Isaiah: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon"—*Isa.* iv. 7. Ezekiel's assurance: "When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Daniel's advice, to Nebuchadnezzar: (chap. iv. 27.)—"Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." Solomon's conclusion of the whole matter is, "to fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."—*Eccl.* xii. 13.

And the whole of our Saviour's sermon on the mount, is so full in the establishment of free grace, & conditional salvation that were it found any where else, it would be called *Arminianism.* "Strive to enter in at the straight gate," was his advice, to the inquisitive man who wished to know how many would be saved—"If ye love me keep my commandments."—

St. Paul

* The *mouths of gainsayers* are to be stopped by referring them to the 9th Article of the Church, "Man is very far gone (*not totally*) from original righteousness."

† i. e. the sacrifice to be offered. See Magee on the atonement.

St. Paul: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping of the commandments of God." (1 *Cor.* vii. 19, compared with *Gal.* v. 6, and vi. 15.) For "Christ being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."—*Heb.* v. 9. "For the grace of God, hath appeared unto all men, teaching them that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself, a peculiar people; zealous of good works."—*Tit.* ii. 12—14. Therefore "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—*Heb.* xii. 14. For "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye, through the spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."—*Rom.* viii. 13. Listen then, to the exhortation of St. James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only."—*James* ii. 22. And ye will be entitled through the merits of the Redeemer to the final "blessing of those who do his commandments;" and "have right to the tree of life."—*Rev.* xxii. 14.

I might as well read to you the whole Bible, as quote passages to this purpose. I therefore conclude this long discourse; by calling your attention to the closing scene of life. At that solemn crisis, when all men are sensible that they must soon appear before their Almighty Judge, we never find them disputing about an eternal decree of election and reprobation; about *moral* and *natural* power; divine prescience, reconciled with *fate* and necessity. No. Their *hopes* and *fears* at this period, generally ebb and flow according to the tenor of their former life. Then the great inquiry is, have I made my *calling* and *election sure*? Have I faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, operating by love? Have I sincerely repented of my sins, and become a new creature, by living in new obedience? We shall all think alike at that awful moment: should we not then live, *as we shall wish we had, when we come to die*?

I warn you then, as you value your eternal salvation, that ye spend not your fleeting days in fruitless inquiries after God's unsearchable counsels, but embrace the mercy offered in the Gospel. Seek earnestly for that evangelical faith, which united the primitive christians in one *hope* and one calling. Avoid schism as a cankor that corrodes the very vitals of Christianity. Exercise that clarity which seeks the *unity of the church*. Rely only on the merits of Jesus Christ; for after your most faithful services, ye fall infinitely short of meriting *eternal life; which is the gift of God*, freely offered to all, but finally bestowed only upon those, who have walked on the level with men, and squared their actions, by the rules of God's holy word; whose hearts have been *sprinkled from an evil conscience*, and who have that new *name which none knoweth, save him that receiveth it*. If such preservere to the end, the Divine presence will accompany *them through the vale of death*; at the last day they will be raised to the life immortal; exalted to the *royal degree of saints*, and united with angels and just men made perfect, where HOLINESS TO THE LORD is universal and complete.

Now

Now to the KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see, be honor and power everlasting. AMEN.

NOTE A.

1. *Calvin* says,* "God not only foresaw that *Adam* would fall, but also ordained that he should," or (to translate all the words of the original) "When therefore they perish in their corruption, they do nothing but suffer the punishment of that misery, into which by his, (God's) predestination, *Adam* fell, and drew his posterity headlong with him:" consequently *Adam's* eating the forbidden fruit was the necessary, unavoidable consequence of the divine decree: and therefore was not a sin, but pure, formal, commendable *obedience*. And yet the Scriptures represent Adam's act as displeasing to the Almighty and the "cause of all our woe."

2. *Calvin* vents his rage against his opponents, in the following language: "These virulent dogs vomit out not only one kind of poison against God, but they deny that it is expressly asserted, that it was decreed by God, *Adam* should perish by his falling: as if God had created the noblest of all his creatures to an uncertain end."†

3. "Many," says *Calvin*, "thinking to excuse God, (literally to drive away hatred from God) so own *Election*, as to deny *Reprobation*. But this is too silly and childish; for election itself, unless opposed to *reprobation* cannot stand."‡

4. *Calvin*, dares to assert that, "All men are not created for the same end; (literally, *in an equal* condition) but some are *foreordained* to eternal life; others to eternal damnation. Therefore according as every man was created for the one end, or the other, we say that he was predestinated to life, or death." Again. "God of his free will and pleasure, so ordains that among men, some should be so born as to be devoted from the womb to certain death, who, by their destruction, might glorify his name."

5. But as if this horrible doctrine were not enough, this audacious interpreter of the Scriptures, says,, in the fifth place, "whom therefore he hath created unto the shame of life and destruction of death, that they should be instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity, that they come to their end; at one time he deprives them of the power of hearing his word, at another he the more blinds and stupifies them."

6. Calvin, in pursuance of his own horrid ideas of divine nature, says, "Behold, God calls to them (the reprobates) that they may be more deaf. He kindles a light that they may be more blind. He brings his doctrines to them that they may be the more confounded, and applies the remedy to them but that they may not be healed."

7. "The reprobate would be thought excusable in sinning, but they cannot avoid the necessity of sinning; especially since such necessity is cast upon them by the ordination of God. But we deny that they are thence rightly excused!"

Thus it is evident from Calvin's own words, which are perfectly explicit, that the reprobates are placed in a situation in which they cannot possibly help themselves, and in which they are carefully prepared for the damnation, to which, from the womb, they are decreed. Salvation is offered to them, but it is to mock them; light is shed around them, but it is to blind them; the voice of mercy is sounding in their ears, but it is to tantalize them; God invites and beseeches them to partake of heavenly bliss, but it is to thrust them to the pit of hell... O ye admirers of this *Genera* doctrine, how

* Inst. III. Sec. 4. † Inst. B. ch. 23. Sec. 2. ‡ Inst. B. III. ch. 24. Sec. 12.

long will you suffer yourselves to be deluded? How long will ye delight in representing a benevolent, a gracious, a merciful God in colors which but note but the *great discovery of human happiness!* How long will ye represent the sincerity of the Almighty as mockery; his truth as falsehood; his compassion as cruelty? Thou sayest, O my God, that thou delightest not in the death of a sinner; but worms of the earth audaciously and impiously declare that thou *dost!* Thou hast declared that thy beloved Son took upon him human nature to redeem the whole world; but thy presumptuous creatures confine thy abundant mercy in *Christ Jesus*, to a comparatively small number! And this they call pure gospel, and the doctrine of grace, and brand as blind and carnal, and unsanctified those who declare in the words of thy Holy Spirit, thereby *Son tasted death for every man.* Be merciful unto them, O God, be merciful unto them; and give them better views of thy salvation, that infidels may no longer mock, and thy gospel be no longer despised."

These are but a few of the passages that might be quoted from Calvin, to prove that he taught a system of nonsense and impiety—of nonsense, because it contradicts the common sense of mankind—of impiety, because it derogates from the honor due to God's name and attributes; and ascribes to the Almighty tyranny, cruelty, injustice, malignity, insincerity, and delight in human misery. There is nothing forced, nothing unfair in this representation. It is the necessary, unavoidable result of Calvin's principles. The generality of his followers, I believe, do not know what his principles were in their full extent, for it is rarely that they hear from the pulpit (and especially at this day) of Calvinistic ministers, any thing said about *reprobation*—or, in fact little or nothing of the great doctrine of justification by faith, they have totally shifted their ground, and are gone, many of them far beyond the extreme of Arminianism, and place more dependence on the means of grace than even Churchmen have been accused of doing.†

B.

To soften down the horrid features of the imputation of Original Sin, unconditionally upon the whole posterity of Adam, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to a definite and distinct number, without any regard to their faith and good works, has called into the field of Polemic controversy, men eminent for their natural and acquired talents; their whole powers have been put in requisition to save the idol of *Geneva* from being tarnished, and reconcile the ways of God to man."

Edwards wrote an elaborate work on the *Human Will*, which for metaphysical display has not been exceeded. After a long inquiry, with a laudable desire to save Calvinism and exonerate the Almighty from being the author of sin, which the torrent inevitably involved, the whole is resolved in *motive*—this wonderful discovery would have canonized him in the 9th century. It took the lead as far as understood, throughout the New England churches—After some time, it began to be hinted that Edwards argued in a *circle*—and good old Dr. Dana dared to inquire *who presented the motive?*—if man, his *free will* would prostrate the Divine plan;* if God, he was still the author of sin. Hopkins, alarmed at the awful consequences of the Edwardean system, and supposing he had made a new discovery, or at least great improvements: and, desirous of being one of the great men, ushered into the world his scheme that promised to reconcile all things in heaven and earth; for one of the first symptoms of the work of grace in the heart was, "to be *willing to be damned!*" The name of this scheme was known by "*Hopkins'* System of *Natural* and *Moral Power*." i. e. That man is naturally free—but has no moral power without receiving irresistible grace—and yet, strange to tell, he (man) was morally guilty for indulging his natural propensities. This system must have had its origin in the Manichean system; for if there is but one God, he must be the author of every *good and perfect Gift*, if the author of natural power, he must be the author of moral. This heterogeneous mass of vain philosophy was still further improved by the late Dr. Huntington of Coventry, Conn. and proved to a demonstration, that the system by legitimate reasoning, terminated in the universal salvation of all men, in a posthumous work entitled "Calvinism Improved." The late Dr. N. Strong, of Hart

† A full length portrait of Calvinism, by an Old-fashioned Churchman, p. 9.
† See Dr. Beecher, and Mr. Nettleton's Letters on Revivals, and particularly Mr. Brockway's view of the Rev. Mr. Beman's Sermon, of Troy.
* This was the language, see Dr. Dana's 2d Examination of Edwards.

ford, exposed the fallacy, by denying the *transfer* of guilt, but left the subject still in darkness respecting the *origin of sin*.

But to put on the finishing stroke in exposing these subtleties of the cunning craftiness of men some over wrote with a more able pen than the late Rev. Mr. Whelpley of New York, in his covered numbers, called the Triangle. The Protestant Episcopal Church in relation to this important subject has ever possessed a steady and consistent course, although the doctrines, which she has inculcated have in their tendency exposed Calvinism in all its forms, and rendered it extremely unpopular, no small to do to induce its friends to array themselves against her. Still the Church has continued to increase.

The friends of Calvinism have found it necessary to devise new plans and put them in execution. Systematical Revivals have been introduced. Amalgamations proposed and in some instances carried into effect; the threadbare story that "the Articles of the Episcopal Church are Calvinistic" has lost its influence, and something further must be done. This has called forth the talents of the present, Rev. Eleazer T. Fitch, Professor of Divinity in Yale College; who, in two discourses, has exceeded all, in naivety of principle, and sophistry of argument, that ever went before him.

To question talents so distinguished as those of the Professor; or to make a single remark that might in the most remote manner, tarnish the glory of that venerable institution, the pride of our country, and the nursery of science, would be as far from the views of the writer, as the principles advanced are repugnant to his feelings. But when he traces the origin of Unitarianism in Harvard College to a departure from Calvinism, and verging into something worse than Pelagianism, he trembles at the consequence that must result from a departure of many distinguished principles of the Christian faith, in the College at Newhaven.

It is not the design of the writer of these notes, to review these discourses; but to bring them into notice, for some more able pen, to expose the false reasons of the Professor; and to show that his view of original sin is but a stepping stone to infidelity.

Nevertheless, a few remarks will show that the foregoing anticipations are not imaginary.

The text stated by the Professor is *Rom.* v. 13. "Sin is not imputed, when there is no law." The proposition laid down, p. 4. is—"Sin, in every form and instance, is reducible to the act of a moral agent in which he violates a known rule of duty." Several proofs are offered.

The first is the *operation of our consciences*.

Is conscience then an infallible guide in all cases, and in all persons?—If so, what was Saul's conscience when he was persecuting the church?—what conscious guilt attended those who gave their first born for the *sin of the soul*—offering up their children to *Moloch*, which God commanded not, neither did it ever come into his mind they should do it, (Jer. xvii. 31.) What conscious guilt attends the mother when she drowns her child in the river *Ganges*; and then immolates herself upon the funeral pile of her departed husband. What conscience has the infant, much less *moral agency*, in its first cries and sufferings? St. Paul, Rom. iii. 12, answers these and similar questions, much more satisfactory than the Professor: who, after making conscience our guide, and director, and constituting, "according to its invariable decisions, ALL OUR SIN." p. 7. Although the cause (i. e. of sinning) preceded the act, p. 16.—yet "there is a moral certainty, that" the "agent" this conscious being, knowing no sin, being accountable for no sin, only in "violating a known obligation;" is *totally depraved*, and this depravity consists in nothing else, than in all the continued volitions of the agent being actually wrong—wrong before he has violated his conscience—and yet only guilty for violating his conscience.—To get over this difficulty, he says, p. 24, there is a moral, certainty, which in fact meets every child of Adam in regard to his first responsible acts of the will, that he will make a wrong choice, a forbidden preference.

Now, I ask from whence did this evil, this preference to evil originate? if in the transgression of our first parents, why not say so, all the primative fathers say so, the reformers say so—Why not Mr. Fitch?—Why, after all, he does say so, though he first qualifies it, by saying—'Adam as the first ancestor of all the race, and as a sinner, *may* be the first and remote author of that moral certainty which thus exists in the case of every one of his posterity commencing moral action in sin, acknowledging very honestly that "he nor any body else, would tell when; but so is the fact." But

the case of infants storing him in the fire, with the universal opinion of all denominations, that they were born in sin, and must be born again; he acknowledged, as they were subjects of circumcision and baptism, and had, "moral agency in miniature,"—they were subjects of Divine Grace, and of our prayers, p. 45.

To close these notes, I would request the reader to avail himself of these disquisitions, and compare the following with the proposition laid down by the Professor,—"that Adam, being constituted the progenitor of the race," so affected all by his conduct during his trial, as to entail upon all the causes of sin, mortality and condemnation, rendering their sin and condemnation morally certain; and yet no man is guilty only by a consciousness of the breach of a known law. And let him remember that all these metaphisical dissertations are to veil the horrid features of Calvinism—and let him thank God that he has a more sure word of prophecy in the unadulterated word of the ever living Jehovah in the Holy Bible—which has been preserved by the Holy Catholic Church—that he has in the bosom of the Church, not only a form of sound words in her Homilies, Liturgy and articles—but the promises of the Lamb of God, that the foot of Pride shall not come nigh to hurt, nor the Hand of Pride to pull them down. But by remaining in the ark, or, like Noah's wandering dove, return with the olive leaf and enter in with an assurance they shall be carried over the waves of this troublesome world, and landed on the happy shore where heresy and schism shall never mar the foundation of that city whose builder and maker is God.

P. S. Since preparing the above for the press, there has fallen into my hands several publications of distinguished merit, on the foregoing subjects, particularly two volumes, octavo, being a comparative view of the controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians, by that venerable and excellent prelate, William White D. D. Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Pennsylvania.

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